HOW MONOTHEISTIC IS MANI'S DUALISM?

Once more on monotheism and dualism in Manichaean gnosis*

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For Ugo Bianchi,
six years after

Summary

A passage from the Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis (CMC 66,4) has led to a series of reflections and opinions from scholars on the dualistic or monotheistic nature of the original form of Manichaeism.

This essay outlines the *status quaestionis* and then goes on to examine, on the basis of texts and using the historico-comparative method, the analogies and differences between the historical "types" of monotheism and dualism (Judaeo-Christianity, Mazdaism, gnosticism), and Manichaeism, which is related to them in different ways and in varying degrees.

Taking position in this debate between minimalist and maximalist points of view, the author attempts to identify the parameters of this original religious creation, and argues that theological monotheism and ontological dualism were, from its birth, coherent elements in its peculiar gnostic conception of reality.

> I, Mani, an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, The Father of Truth, from whom I was born, who lives and abides forever, existing before all things and abiding after all things—all things which have come into being and will be, exist through his Power. For from this very one I have been brought forth, but I also am from his will.[1]

It is well known that this passage from the *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis* (*CMC*), in which the theologian Baraies quotes the beginning of the *Living Gospel* (Mani's fundamental work), has been the focus of reflection by Manichaean scholars on the nature or even the

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[1] *CMC* 66, 4 ff.; trans. by Koenen 1990, 3.

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original existence of Manichaean dualism. The problem is all the more evident because the same passage is also documented in the Middle-Persian and Sogdian texts M 17 + M 172 I.[2] In a masterful essay, L. Koenen quotes the M 17 in synopsis with the *CMC* text[3] and surveys the positions (in part derived from this text) of certain scholars regarding Mani's dualism. While accepting H.J.W. Drijvers's[4] definition of "optimistic Dualism," Koenen in particular rejects the conclusions of G. Stroumsa.[5]

According to Stroumsa, the *CMC* attests to an original, absolutely Jewish-Christian phase of Manichaean thought in which a primary form of non-ontological, but ethical, dualism still survives and cohabits substantially with a theological monotheistic conception. Koenen demonstrates, however, with comprehensive, reliable and balanced documentation, (1) that the radical, ontological dualism of the Manichaean system (with the implicit existence of all its mythical apparatus) is fundamentally present in the *CMC* and ergo constitutes an original datum in Manichaeism that "may be influenced by Zoroastrian beliefs, although Zoroastrian dualism is ethical in its heart";[6] and (2) that the cosmos and the human body are definitely given positive functions,[7] aspects that are underlined in the *CMC* in relation to Mani's body.

Regarding the two expressions proclaiming a monotheistic faith, in the second—"all things which have come into being and will be, exist through his Power"—Koenen identifies parallels with the New Testament (he interprets the Power through which all things exist as "Jesus the Splendour"). On the other hand, Mani complicates, and

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[2] Boyce 1975, Text c, 32-33; cf. Gnoli 1994, 453 f.

[3] Koenen 1990, 2; cf. Henrichs and Koenen 1970, 193-195.

[4] Drijvers 1984; cf. Koenen 1990, 1.

[5] Stroumsa 1986; cf. Stroumsa 1984 = Stroumsa 1992, 243-258.

[6] Koenen 1990, 21. Cfr. Giuffré Scibona 1986. On the close connection in Zoroastrianism of the "ethical" with the "cosmic" cf. Bianchi 1958b, 84, 221; Gnoli 1994, 458. On the analogous but not identical connection in Manichaeism represented by the Manichaean *dikaiosyne* cf. Ries 1977, 1986, 1993; Giuffré Scibona 1997, 99.

[7] Koenen 1990, 13-24.

in my opinion deeply modifies, the sense of the Christian formula by adding the abbreviated version of an expression derived from the Pahlavi textual tradition: "what is, was, and will be" (pehl. *Kē ast, būd, ud bavēd*).[8] This formula, attested in various places of the *Kephalaia*,[9] indicates the passing of the three metaphysical ages that lead to God's victory and thereby actuate the pre-eminence of the first principle over the second.

The expression—also present in the *Kephalaia*[10]—affirming the eternal nature of God "who lives and abides forever, existing before all things and abiding after all things" recalls parallel Jewish, Christian and Koranic formulations and appears to diverge from the Manichaean dogma of the coeternity of the two principles. Koenen believes that the emotional attachment to divine reality—which he compares to henotheistic positions or to pantheistic conceptions of pagan divinities of late antiquity (but the differences should also be taken into account!)[11]—induced Mani to give rhetoric "priority over dogma." In Koenen's view, therefore, in certain cases sentiment and rhetoric are elements that condition and limit the dogmatic structure of Manichaean dualism.[12]

Ugo Bianchi has expressed his authoritative opinion on this matter in various works.[13] In the first place he has clarified, through precise historical definitions, the nature of dualism in historico-religious phenomena. Since ethical dualism is an insignificant and misleading concept, Bianchi regards dualism as the doctrine according to which two principles, whether or not coeternal, determine and qualify the reality of what exists and manifests itself in the world. He defines Manichaean

[8] Widengren 1961, 150; for another analogous formula cf. *Greater Bundahisn* I, 2 (Zaehner 1955, 286): *būd ud ast ud hamē bawēd*. Cf. Gnoli 1994, 453 f.

[9] *Keph*. 1, 15, 19 f.; 7, 34, 25 f.; 24, 73, 27 f.; 102, 257, 6 f. (ed. Gardner 1995, 21, 38, 75, 261).

[10] *Keph*. 7, 34, 25 f. (ed. Gardner 1995, 38).

[11] In Paganism these positions did not rule out the normal ritual practices dedicated to the other gods of polytheistic Pantheon.

[12] Koenen 1990, 34.

[13] Bianchi 1990; 1991; 1993.

dualism as radical and eschatological and he limits and specifies the positive role of the Manichaean cosmos, showing that its constituent element (apart from the two luminaries and the imprisoned light) is a dead and demonic substance derived from the slaughter of the demons and only later organized by a divine demiurge. Bianchi underlines such ontological negativity also in relation to the body, which is certainly the obligatory instrument of purification and salvation, but which originally was the product of an act of retaliation by demonic powers. As Bianchi notes, not even the providential character of Mani's body escapes these negative qualifications regarding substance, even if the Prophet, in the prologue of the *Living Gospel* quoted in the *CMC*, portrays himself in a relationship of direct derivation from the Father of Greatness. Precisely in that prologue, the monotheistic affirmation of the Father's eternal existence, over all that derives from him and exists through his power, raises the question whether Manichaean dualism may be subsequent to Mani's original monotheism (Stroumsa[14] and Tardieu[15]), or quite non-existent.

Bianchi takes a position against these hypotheses and against any possible heretical meaning of the expression—an expression that, says Koenen, is a sign of the rhetorical compromises accepted by Manichaean dogma (not always and uniformly coherent). The *aporia* is overcome by the consideration that the expression "all the things"—i.e. mankind and the cosmos—means everything having a positive ontological quality, whereas the dark material reality is put into the background (even if it continues to be substantially present in the world). Mani is essentially a self-defined prophet ("Apostle of Jesus Christ") and, as such, he needs to style himself as a direct product of the God of Light, proclaiming at the same time God's eternity and God's direct

[14] Stroumsa 1984 = 1992, 243-258; cf. Stroumsa 1986, 154.

[15] Tardieu 1981, 24, cf. 102. Giving greater importance to Manichaean prophetology situated in the Jewish-Christian tradition, Tardieu fails to account adequately for the Manichaean doctrine of the two principles and substances; cf. the well documented argument of Decret 1991, 60 ff.; cf. Sfameni Gasparro 1988, 46. Cf. also Tardieu 1988, 262.

relationship with the providential nature of history and of the things that he set in motion. Getting to the heart of the problem, Bianchi tackles the question of the coexistence between monotheism and dualism in the Manichaean system. On the one hand, he identifies in both Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism a typology of the divine according to which radical dualism provokes a *deminutio* of the divinity, whose omnipotence is reduced to the omniscience of an eschatological victory over his adversary and ergo to the power of organizing history accordingly. On the other hand, Bianchi points out that in Manichaeism an "essentialist" attitude emphasizes the opposition of the substances (dualism), whereas an "existential" attitude (based on consciousness of the adversary's non-divinity) insists on the glorification of the Father of Greatness, giving rise to explicit monotheistic expressions.

Therefore, monotheism and dualism are, respectively, theological and ontological parameters of the Manichaean system. This factor is worthy of consideration, as are the roles that may have been played, in its original elaboration, by Mani's Elchasaitic Judaeo-Christian education and by the dualism of Iranian tradition.

New contributions to the hypothesis that monotheism and dualism may coexist have been made recently by the Iranist G. Gnoli (1994), who advances important arguments in favour of the compatibility—or even the congruence—of the two lines of thought and provides useful references to their respective typologies. Gnoli rightly makes reference to a statement made by Pettazzoni that will be discussed further on.

Equally perceptive are Gnoli's reservations on the meaning of "ethical" in Mazdeism, even though he is too quick to endorse the unacceptable hypothesis that the Manichaean formula depends totally on its Iranian counterpart. In fact, in the light of the latest studies and findings on Manichaeism (though we are perfectly aware of the presence there of some basic structures of Iranian religion), it is unacceptable to quote an expression of H.-Ch. Puech out of its context in order to affirm that "Mani restò fedele ad una delle ispirazioni fondamentali del mazdeismo, che attribuiva la creazione al Dio buono,

saggio e onnisciente,"[16] unless important and substantial specifications are added.

In his lucid and detailed argumentation, Puech refers this expression (preceded by a precise limitation: "sur ce point") only to the "organisation du mélange qui suit la défaite initiale de Dieu" and certainly not to the creation, neither in the monotheistic sense of *creatio ex nihilo* nor in a total sense ("non pas le mélange pris en lui-même"). Puech, in fact, in the same context asks himself: "A vrai dire, peut-on même parler de 'création' dans le manichéisme?"[17] As I have tried to demonstrate in a previous paper (Giuffré Scibona 1997), the creation, intended as total existence of cosmos and mankind, is the focal point only so far as an historical comparison between Mazdeism and Manichaeism brings to light their connections and especially their dissimilarities. As a matter of fact, even if the mechanisms of creation are organized according to an analogous dualistic pattern and are addressed to a similar aim, i.e. salvation, the specific ways and substances of the two religious contexts are profoundly different.

Actually, the "Creator," or—as the *Vendidad* puts it—the "Creator of the world of the bodies,"[18] is Ahura Mazda, hindered by Ahriman's *Patyāra*, the negative counter-creation which inspires corruption, violence, mendacity and the other forces that obstruct life. And, as Shaked demonstrates in an important essay of 1967, "the created world, *gētˉg*, is entirely the work of Ohrmazd."[19]

In the Manichaean view, on the contrary, the same reality results from an improper mixing of two distinct substances, one coming from the luminous substance of the Father of Greatness in a succession of evocations, the other from the dark and ontologically negative *Hyle*.

The gnostic quality of Manichaean dualism is based on the opposition of the substances, which is closely correlated (also in the *CMC*) to

[16] Gnoli 1994, 455; cf. Puech 1979, 142.

[17] Puech 1979, *ibidem*.

[18] *Vendidad*, Farg. 2, I, 1 (ed. Darmesteter 1960, 20). This invocation occurs in the Farg. 2-8 *passim*.

[19] Shaked 1967, 232.

the opposition of the originating natures.[20] It is in the field of creation, therefore, that we can make a clear distinction between Manichaean gnostic dualism and the opposition of principles and actions typical of Mazdeism.

After K. Rudolph's important contribution (1991), two significant essays by P.O. Skjaervø (1997) and W. Sundermann (1997) have recently examined both religious conceptions and have clearly and thoroughly indicated, paying close attention to the texts, the differences and analogies between the two systems on the basis of their developments.

Now, bearing in mind the points at issue and the positions of the different scholars, I would like in the first place to stress the importance of examining the subject in question—i.e. monotheism and dualism in Manichaean gnosis—in the wider historico-cultural contexts in which Mani acted: in the community in which he grew up (and where he met with failure) and later—as the original ecumenical vocation of his prophetic message commanded—in environments of far greater cultural variety and complexity. In Mesopotamia and western Eranshar,[21] in fact, whose cosmopolitan cities and ancient commercial routes by land or river had for many centuries promoted a dense gathering and mixing of cultures as well as of religious ideas and practices, Mani certainly came across various forms of gnostic systems which—along with the legalistic and encratitic model of Jewish-Christianity of his first co-religionists—converged on the same cultural and geographical area. But he was certainly also acquainted with the Zoroastrian tradition which the mighty caste of the Mobad used to oppose to the various religious creeds which had spread throughout the vast territory of the Sassanian empire. There is no doubt that Mani's education took place in a monotheistic Jewish-Christian milieu under strict orthodoxy. But the Baptists' (not unanimous) reaction to Mani's dissent, the endeavours to persuade him to remain in the sect, the convening of a synod and the violent accusations launched against him—all these elements

[20] *CMC* 65, 12 ff.; 84, 10-24; 85, 1-12.

[21] A comprehensive and detailed picture of 3rd century Iran in Gnoli 1985, 73-91.

show a community defending itself from the schismatic or heretical intrusions coming from a wide range of dissident trends and systems (gnostic or not) present throughout Syro-Mesopotamia. On the other hand, the creeds and practices of 3rd century Iran—even if we consider them alien to Mani's family tradition—were certainly not unknown to Mani himself, who in fact encountered them once again during his stay at the Sassanian court.

Nevertheless, in the construction that Mani created and passed down to his followers, from the earliest testimonies to the later ones, the elements that may have contributed to his personal religious experiences appear so deeply modified (in order to be inserted and be rendered functional as part of a whole) that it is impossible to trace them back to their original systems. Not even the gnostic structure of original dualism—which, with its strict encratism, is the keystone of the whole doctrine (though it is undeniably related to fundamental precepts of previous gnostic currents: Basilides's *barbaroi*, Bardesanes, the Sethian-Gnostics of Hippolytus, the *Paraphrase of Shem*)—may be neatly reduced to the historical sources of those experiences.[22] Another reason is that in a perfectly functioning mechanism such as Manichaeism it is dangerous and misleading to isolate a part, however fundamental, and use it as a term of comparison. But it is precisely the resistance of the Manichaean system to being circumscribed within the parameters of a historical typology and, on the other hand, its birth and development inside analogous and neighbouring religious worlds which stimulate the historian of religions to apply the instrument of his own discipline. In fact, if a historical typology lives only in the reality of its historical examples, comparison—wide, open, flexible and as attentive as possible to differences—is the ideal tool for defining the specificity of each of those examples. The aim, though, must be to compare functioning structures, and not single aspects or personalities, in order to consider the foundations and mechanisms of the system *per se* and relate them to precise lines of scriptural tradition. In contrast, it

[22] Cf. the justified reservations of Sundermann 1997, 359 to the conclusions of Casadio 1996, 672.

is ineffective and methodologically erroneous to investigate historical origins or derivations in an almost mechanical way from unmodifiable patterns.

Considering that since its early documentation Manichaean religion shows a relationship at various levels between monotheism and dualism, it may be useful to further clarify the objects of the two conceptions and their locations in their specific contexts. As regards the typology of dualism and radical Manichaean dualism, I think that it is difficult to find a definition which is more precise, articulate and exhaustive than the one suggested by U. Bianchi.[23] I only add that the words with which Mani criticizes Baptist practices demonstrate the strong and unequivocal presence of a radical dualism already in the first formulation of the system. Mani in fact emphasizes the anthropological—but already metaphysically defined—opposition of two substances in a tragic struggle entrusted to human responsibility until the end. This opposition is evident in the radical ontological impurity of the body, an impurity strictly related to the distinction between life and death, light and darkness.[24] For this reason it is not acceptable to talk—as G. Stroumsa does[25]—of a "social dualism," maintaining that Mani's polemic against the Elchasaites is a fact of purely cultic nature.

Stroumsa, an acute and shrewd researcher of gnostic and Manichaean contexts, overemphasizes the original Jewish-Christian environment of Mani's formation in his evaluation of the Manichaean concept, as it appears in the *CMC* and (even more explicitly) in other documents. There is no doubt that Mani's surroundings represented the basic humus, the traditional furrow of the Prophet's new creation, which left its most evident mark on Manichaean Christology, prophetology, Paulinism, apocalypticism and rigid encratism. This environment, however, though not immune itself from gnostic influences, was soundly based on an absolutely monotheistic theology and even more on an anthropological doctrine that would never have admitted

[23] 1991; 1993; cf. Bianchi 1978, 49-62; Bianchi 1983a.

[24] *CMC* 81-85, esp. 84-85.

[25] Stroumsa 1986, 154; idem 1992, 246 f.

in man (God's creature in body and soul) the idea of the two *ousiai*. This gnostic view of man, and the concept of *anima mundi*,[26] which are clearly present since the beginning as background motifs of the *CMC* narration (as shown by Mani's behaviour as an elect),[27] are later expressed explicitly as the culminating point of Mani's revelation and opposition to the Baptists.[28] In the *CMC*, the young Mani detaches himself gradually[29] and covertly[30] from his co-religionists according to a narrative scheme typical of Prophets' life-stories. The reason for this is to safeguard his own life,[31] as is evident at the moment of his definitive separation.[32] However, in the *CMC* we can observe two parallel temporal processes:[33] one related to the body,[34] the other to the *Nous*, which can receive the *Syzygos*' revelation.[35] In the latter process it is possible to recognize the various levels of Manichaean *gnosis*,[36] which can be acquired only gradually.[37] Mani also acts as a model when he shows how this knowledge—which brings salvation—can be attained.

As Stroumsa rightly points out,[38] the esotericism of Mani's teaching has many analogies also with the esotericism of Jewish-Christian

[26] *CMC* 6-10; 12, 1-6. Cf. Ries 1986, 173 ff., 1993, 187 ff.

[27] *CMC* 5, 4-8; 6, 2-6; 9, 1-14.

[28] *CMC* 84, 10-24; 85, 1-12.

[29] *CMC* 30, 4-7.

[30] *CMC* 4, 12; 25, 2-12; 26, 1-6; 73, 17-22; 74, 1-2.

[31] *CMC* 8, 11-14.

[32] *CMC* 87, 12-14.

[33] Bianchi 1986, 28-29.

[34] *CMC* 11, 7 ff.; 12, 8 ff.; 17, 8 ff.; 18, 1-16.

[35] *CMC* 3, 8-13; 13, 2-13; 14, 4-14; 15, 1-14. Cf. Giuffré Scibona 1986, 357 f.

[36] *CMC* 21, 2-16 (concerning the body); 22, 1-16 (concerning the Father of Greatness, the divine origin of his own soul as a part of the *anima mundi* and *substantia Dei*); 34, 1-8 (concerning the Fourfold God, the Ships of Light, the Bosom of the Column, the deities in it, the Power, i.e. the *machina mundi*); 35, 1-10 (concerning the Manichaean Ecclesia); 41, 1-5 (concerning the original battle of the Manichaean myth); 65, 12 ff. (concerning the two principles and the way of the mixture); 132, 11 ff. (concerning the two natures and three times).

[37] On this topic Giuffré Scibona 1982, 166 ff.

[38] Stroumsa 1986, 153-158.

sects (besides, all the esoteric systems of this period derive their ultimate model from the tradition of Hellenistic *mysteria*). It is the original content, however, that completely modifies its perspectives and methods. Mani's psychological isolation from his co-religionists not only reflects a common *topos* of the Prophets' life histories (cf. similar Gathic images related to Zarathustra)[39] but also exemplifies, in the person of Mani, a typical situation of the Manichaean *gnostikós* "in the midst of the multitude entangled in error."[40] Neither Mani's isolation nor his gradual detachment shows an "anthropological" or "social" dualism. The opposition that occurs in Mani's case is different from the Qumranic distinction between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness, even if Mani certainly inherited forms and images from these contexts too, as he did from other models (Iranian, gnostic and otherwise) that circulated in his original environment. Although the *CMC* text culminates in this opposition (which has ontological foundations),[41] the actual aim of the narration is Mani's testimony of his prophetic mission and not a conscious and systematic explanation of the theogonic and cosmogonic principles of his religious view.

On the one hand, the purpose of the text makes it necessary to place the only God in direct relationship to his Prophet, when his providential coming into the world is described. This is underlined by the appropriate quotation—taken from the *Living Gospel*—of the monotheistic proclamation.[42] On the other hand, in the person of Mani and in the *Syzygos*' revelations (which provide answers to typically gnostic questions)[43] we can find the tragically contradictory mixture in the human being of a soul of light and a body of darkness. And when Mani, refer-

[39] Yn. 46, 1.

[40] *CMC* 31, 4-8.

[41] *CMC* 84, 10-24; 85, 1-12.

[42] *CMC* 66, 4 ff.; immediately before (65, 12 ff.)—as Koenen (1990, 5) notes—the same Baraies quotes a fragmentary passage from Mani's Letter to Edessa expressing the dualistic concept of the "foundation of all good and evil deeds."

[43] *CMC* 21; 22; 23.

ring to the authority of Elchasai,[44] believes that he is taking the Saviour's commandments back to their original meaning, he actually intends to refer to—along with monotheism—the gnostic dualistic doctrine of the *anima mundi* suffering in the elements. What he is referring to, therefore, are the rules of the *anapausis*,[45] the Augustinian *signaculum manuum*: this is the "secret mystery" which accompanies Mani from the beginning of the narration[46] and which is revealed to him more and more deeply. In this way the *CMC* reflects an irremediable fundamental contrast between an absolute Jewish-Christian encratitic monotheism on the one hand, and a gnostic monotheistic theology and dualistic ontology on the other, whose functional relation is an original creation of Mani. As is shown by his criticism of Baptist practices, Mani knows very well that these respective positions are too far apart[47] to be reconciled and he subsequently demonstrates that those purifying practices are absolutely useless.[48] This criticism contains a precise gnostic concept. Mani will proclaim in front of his co-religionists that purification and salvation can be gained only through *gnosis*, a knowledge whose contents and aims are represented by the distinction (*chorismós*)[49] of the two substances—Light and Darkness—that make up man.

It is not possible, therefore, to affirm that "l'analyse du Codex manicheén de Cologne ne semble révéler aucun trace de dualisme ontologique."[50] An ontological dualism and a theological monotheism coexist coherently in it. The asymmetry of the two principles, present in a coherent *continuum* in many passages of the textual tradition,[51] neither affects the sense of the dualistic pattern nor reduces

[44] *CMC* 94; 95; 96; 97, 1-16.

[45] On the meaning of the *anapausis* in the *CMC*, cf. Henrichs 1973, 48-50; Bianchi 1986, 18-22; Ries 1986, 174, 179 ff.

[46] *CMC* 5, 3-8.

[47] *CMC* 73, 8-16; 79, 15-21; 80, 1-15.

[48] *CMC* 81; 82; 83; 84, 1-9.

[49] *CMC* 84, 9-24; 85, 1-12.

[50] Stroumsa 1992, 246.

[51] *Ibidem*, 250 ff.

its importance. This pattern, without being ditheistic, is no less radical and absolute, and the incommensurability between the two principles emphasizes the structural function of monotheism and dualism. Such "lack of balance"[52] between the two principles—which, like the monotheism-dualism pattern, is also found in the Iranian tradition—receives a new and completely different meaning and greater evidence in Manichaeism because both God and his evil counterpart are attributed a nature of substances.[53] The aim is to restore the power of the only God, diminished by the presence of this second principle. The superiority of the Father of Greatness—stressed in the *CMC* with expressions of monotheistic character in relation to the person of Mani[54]—is founded on the ontological difference from—and opposition to—the *Hyle* and on his consubstantiality with his own functions and with the *anima lucis* imprisoned in mankind and the *cosmos*. This Manichaean monotheism is undeniably an original creation of Mani that diverges substantially from absolute monotheism, whether Zoroastrian or Jewish-Christian.

As regards the phenomenon of monotheism in the field of history of religions, it is useful to recall the fundamental achievements that have been made by R. Pettazzoni.[55] He separated monotheism from the misleading issue of the Supreme Being among primitive peoples and defined it as a specific historical fact occurring only in Judaism (and by derivation in Christianity and Islam) and Zoroastrianism. Concerning this latter religious tradition, Pettazzoni remarks that:

> L'idea monoteistica ci appare nel Zoroastrismo delle origini allo stato puro. In realtà il dualismo non è negazione del monoteismo, anzi è il monoteismo stesso in due aspetti opposti e contrari.[56]

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[52] The expression is that of Shaked 1967, 234 in reference to the Pahlavi texts. For Manichaeism cf. Bianchi 1988a; Casadio 1996, 665 on the obvious character of it in every form of dualism.

[53] Bianchi 1990, 224-226; Bianchi 1988a; 1988b.

[54] *CMC* 19, 8-11; 22, 3; 66, 4 ff.

[55] Pettazzoni dedicated two volumes to this important topic for historians of religions (1922; 1955), plus several essays.

[56] Pettazzoni 1920, 96, 112.

This definition can be further enriched by some observations of A. Bausani,[57] this great and unforgettable scholar of Islam (as well as of the Iranian world and of Far-Eastern languages and cultures), who distinguished between two types of monotheism: a primary one (Jewish and Islamic, marked by prophetic sermons and identifying the divine with a single, transcendent personal God) and a secondary one, derived from the former. The characterizing element of Iranian monotheism, which Bausani calls "failed Monotheism," is a sort of progressive "fermentation of the One God"[58] which, from Gathic texts right through Middle-Persian ones, increasingly concretizes and personifies psychological or moral attributes of the personal God of theism. This process, alien to both Hellenic culture and the culture of primary monotheisms, seems to involve also the transcendent evil hypostases and, in my view, this is a completely different matter from the personification of the *aeons* of the gnostic *pleroma*. This is undoubtedly one of the main points of the mythical fabulation,[59] in which the story of the Manichaean God is expressed together with its negative counterpart. At the same time, we can perceive the analogies and differences between the respective functions and relationships of Iranian and Manichaean monotheism-dualism. The divine reality moves from protology to eschatology through a millenary struggle of creatures in the former case and of substances in the latter. Between these two poles operates, at various levels, a mechanism of separation and reintegration which is not a mere exercise of opposing polarities invented by Mani or by the Manichaean doctors (as Tardieu[60] would have it), but is the painful existence lived by humans. Though man feels

[57] Bausani 1957; 1963.

[58] Bausani 1963, 168.

[59] On the value of Manichaean mythology as "méthaphysique 'vécue,'" cf. Bianchi 1993, 21 ff. The circular relationship between anthropology and metaphysics and their coexistence give Manichaean ethics a quite particular nature, completely different from Christian ethics, while the different consistence of the two substances in every single human being causes the alternative of perdition or salvation to be worked in the inner nature of man. *Contra* Stroumsa 1992, 257 f.

[60] 1981, 24; cf. 27, 37; 102.

consubstantial—in his luminous essence—with that only God whom he recognizes as such, he is nonetheless aware that salvation or eternal imprisonment depend on progressive self-consciousness of his degree of mixture and on consequent observance of the rules of solidarity that govern the substances. In Manichaeism the reality of such a dynamic form of monotheism-dualism is inseparably tied with the personalities and the fundamental motifs of—above all—Jewish-Christianity (see the magnificent and pathetic transformation of Jesus) but also of other religious traditions.

An example of the inextricable interweaving of such different components is already found in the great eschatological fresco of the *Shābuhragān*, where motifs and personages of the Iranian tradition join scenes and expressions from the New Testament. Once the distinction between the damned and the saved has been made and once the great purifying fire and the imprisonment of Darkness have taken place, divine functions and luminous substances can abandon their temporary homes and reconstitute the Paradise of Light in the presence of the Father of Greatness, whose face is visible at last.[61]

A not dissimilar description of the reintegration of the only divine reality at the end of the eschatological purification is found in *Keph*. 5, 1-21:

> . . .] and they go in to him and become [. . . / . . .pe]rfume[. . .s]etup[. . . an]d they reign for ever, and a single God comes to be [. . .ov/er] the totality, being above [the to]tality. You find no opponent/from this time on again/st the Father, the King of the Light and the [. . . / . . .] which they . . . in from the [beginning. . .] they are mixed and joined with one another/.[62]

A passage of the same section,[63] set in the protological perspective that precedes and mirrors the eschatological one, clearly outlines the situation of the two principles and natures before mixing takes place.

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[61] This eschatological picture, deduced from Middle-Persian and Parthian texts, is traced by M. Boyce 1975, 8, who publishes *ibidem*, 76-81 six fragments of the ms. A more complete edition in MacKenzie 1979; 1980.

[62] Ed. Gardner 1995, 10.

[63] 3, 32-36. Gardner 1995, 10.

Here too, in this "important genre for the propagation of the religion"[64] that reflects "the auroral memory of the disciples,"[65] the foundation is the coexistence of dualism and monotheism. The following statements in *Keph.* 34, 22-26 are based on the certainty of final victory and on the absolute incommensurability of the Father of Greatness with respect to matter:

> The First Father is the Father of Grea/tness, the blessed one of the glory, the [on]e who has no measure to his gr[ea]tness; who also is the first o[n]ly begotten, the f[i]/rst eternal; who exists with fiv[e f]athers for ever; the one who exists before everything that has existed and that will exist.[66]

A theological affirmation of this type, very similar to the one contained in the *CMC*, appears in no way heretical in a work meant for religious education such as the *Kephalaia*, if one perceives its meaning in the light of the violent attack that *Keph.* 286, 24-288, 18[67] launches against the monotheistic conception of Christianity. When, as everybody knows, Mani is introduced to speak, he asks where the evils of the world come from if in the beginning nothing existed outside God. He subsequently answers this question with the evangelical parable of the two trees, interpreted dualistically. But from a comparison with the qualities of the single, creating and transcendent[68] God of historical Monotheism, it is clear that the nature of the Manichaean Father of Greatness boils down to his closed and articulate relationship with the particular individual essences of the *anima lucis* and with the personifications/functions of the Divinity, which all constitute an absolutely compact whole.[69] So *Keph.* 63, 19-64, 12[70] teaches that the denomination "Father of Greatness" defines

[64] Gardner 1995, XX.

[65] Gardner 1995, XXIII.

[66] Gardner 1995, 38.

[67] Gardner 1995, 288-289.

[68] On the logically difficult assumption of the transcendence of the Manichaean God cf. Decret 1991, 61, who bases his demonstration on Augustinian texts.

[69] On this topic cf. Bianchi 1988a, 1988b, 1990, 1991.

[70] Gardner 1995, 66-67.

the "first esta/[b]lished thing. . . His great[ness is the gr]eat earth where he lives, he being established/[i]n it [. . .] the essence of the light that swathes/all the [r]ich go[d]s and the angels and the dwellings/[. . .] is set over it/." But this designates also "the Third Ambassador," "Jesus the Splendour," "the Pillar of Glory," "the Light Mind."

The theodicy—the main subject of polemical controversies—demonstrates more clearly that God's specificity in Manichaeism emerges precisely from his relationship with the negative principle. The incommensurability between the two principles is already pointed out by the Neoplatonic Alexander of Lycopolis (the first witness of Manichaeism in Egypt), who affirms that "the measure of God's goodness surpasses by far that of the evilness of matter"[71] but it is underlined with much more emphasis in Augustine's polemical writings, as F. Decret has well demonstrated in an important paper.[72]

When Milevi's Manichaean bishop Faustus, defending himself from the accusation of ditheism, attacks his adversaries, he does nothing but affirm the uniqueness of his God:

> Unus deus est, an duo? Plane unus, quomodo ergo vos duos adseritis? Numquam in nostris quidem adsertionibus duorum deorum auditum est nomen. sed tu unde hoc suspicaris cupio scire. quia bonorum duo principia traditis. est quidem, quod duo principia confitemur, sed unum ex his deum vocamus, alterum hyle, aut, ut communiter et usitate dixerim, daemonem.[73]

The question is obviously not only nominal but substantial, as Faustus will say to his adversaries. So he stresses the opposition between the two principles, of which only one is God, and compares them to pairs of opposites:

> quodsi tu hoc puta duos significare deos, poteris et medico disputante de infirmitate atque sanitate duas easdem putare sanitates; et cum quis bonum nominat et malum, tu poteris eadem duo putare bona . . . si et de albo et nigro disputante me et frigido, et calido et dulci et amaro dicas, quia duo alba et duo calida et duo dulcia ostenderim, nonne videberis mentis incompos et cerebri

[71] *C. manich. opin. Disp.* II (transl. Horst and Mansfeld 1974, 52).

[72] Cf. n. 15.

[73] *C. Faustum* XXI, 1, 9-14, *CSEL* XXV, 1, 568.

> minime sani? Sic et cum duo principia doceo, deum et hylen, non idcirco videri iam debeo tibi duos ostendere deos.[74]

Here, in the same way as in the *Kephalaia*, the contrast between this particular conception of God and Jewish-Christian monotheism allows us to determine the respective characteristics of the two opposites and offers the Manichaean bishop the occasion to emphasize the superiority of Manichaeism insofar as Christians—like pagans— *bona et mala, mutabilia et certa ... corporalia et divina unum habere principium dogmatizant*.[75]

Other polemical passages of Augustine's writings underline the nature of the Manichaean God and the compactness—in the divine reign—of the substance of Light, which spreads over the cosmos. So, in his exegesis of the description of the Father's reign in the *Epistula Fundamenti*, the Manichaean Felix, hounded by Augustine's insistent questions, bases dualistic Manichaean ontology on *Gen*, 1.1-2.[76]

Felix then returns to his Manichaean texts and explains the nature of the *terra lucida et beata*:

> Dixisti ergo de terra illa in qua Deus habitat, an facta est ab illo, an generavit illam, an coeterna illi est. Et ego dico, quia quomodo Deus aeternus est, et factura apud illum nulla est, totum aeternum est.[77]

Again, in reply to Augustine's question *si quae genuit Deus, coaeterna non sunt illi, melior est terra illa quam non generavit Deus, ubi habitant omnia quae generavit Deus, quam terram dicis ab eo non generatam*, Felix specifies: *Coaqueantur sibi omnia, et quae generavit, id est, terra illa ubi commorabatur ... Et qui generavit et quos generavit, et ubi positi sunt, omnia aequalia sunt.*[78] And to Augustine's precise question whether *unius ergo substantiae sunt?* he replies: *Unius.*[79] In an attempt to cause Felix to contradict himself,

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[74] *C. Faustum* XXI, 1, 15-25, *CSEL* XXV, 1, 568.

[75] *C. Faustum* XX, 3, 11-12, *CSEL* XXV, 1, 537.

[76] *C. Felicem* I, XVII, 531 (ed. Jolivet-Jourjon 1961, 684-689).

[77] *C. Felicem* I, XVIII, 532, 688.

[78] *C. Felicem* I, XVIII, 532, 690.

[79] *C. Felicem* I, XVIII, 532, 690.

Augustine insists: *Hoc quod est Deus pater, hoc sunt filii ipsius, hoc et terra illa?* And Felix answers: *Hoc unum sunt omnes.*[80] Augustine continues: *Hoc totum una substantia est?* The answer: *Una.*[81]

In this way, by a comparison between this form of monotheism and the Jewish-Christian one, we can perceive the difference between the two religious phenomena. The term monotheism, however, is more suitable for the Jewish-Christian model, because in this case—as Bianchi remarks[82]—the *monos* component has a content that is reflexive, polemic, and inclusive (and at the same time exclusive) of its opposite. In Manichaean monotheism, instead, the deity, although unique in its substance, is defined as light in darkness only through its relationship with diabolic matter. This particular character of Manichaean monotheism as well as the divergence between Manichaean and Iranian dualism in the God-cosmos-man relationship demonstrate the radical and profoundly gnostic essence of Manichaean religion. And it is precisely the gnostic concept which, in its various components, plays a decisive role in Mani's original organization of his system.

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[80] *C. Felicem* I, XVIII, 532, 690.
[81] *C. Felicem* I, XVIII, 532, 690.
[82] 1958a, 65 ff.

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